

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4847

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

USINT CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMCONSUL LENINGRAD BY POUCH

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

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E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, UR, XF

SUBJECT: PRAVDA COMMENTARY AND SOVIET LECTURER POSITIVE
ON ME PEACE CONFERENCE

1. SUMMARY. SOVIET PRESS TREATMENT OF GENEVA ME
PEACE CONFERENCE CONTINUES POSITIVE LINE ON PROSPECTS
FOR SETTLEMENT. PRAVDA COMMENTARY DECEMBER 26 SAYS
OPENING MEETING IS IMPORTANT FIRST STEP TOWARD
SETTLEMENT BUT QUESTIONS WHETHER ISRAEL READY TO
SEIZE OPPORTUNITY FOR PEACE. INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
LECTURER DECEMBER 24 SAID ME CRISIS SHOWED IMPORTANCE
OF IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH THE U.S., STRENGTHENED THE
SOVIET UNION'S POSITION IN THE ME, AND ENABLED ARABS
TO REVERSE A DEAD END SITUATION. LECTURER ALSO SAID SOVIETS
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ARE NEGOTIATING ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH

SAUDI ARABIA AND OTHER PERSIAN GULF STATES. END SUMMARY.

2. REPORTAGE AND COMMENTARY IN SOVIET PRESS HAS PLAYED OPENING PHASE OF GENEVA CONFERENCE POSITIVELY. COVERAGE HAS BEEN RELATIVELY FACTURAL, INCLUDING SUMMARY OF SECRETARY'S STATEMENTS IN GENEVA AND REPORTS OF HIS MEETINGS WITH GROMYKO. NOTABLY ABSENT FROM COVERAGE, HOWEVER, WAS REPORT OF GROMYKO'S MEETING WITH EBAN DESPITE FULL COVERAGE OF FORMER'S MEETINGS WITH OTHER CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS.

3. PRAVDA COMMENTARY BY DEMCHENKO DECEMBER 26 ILLUSTRATES SOVIET PRESS ATTITUDE: CONVOCATON OF ME PEACE CONFERENCE IN ITSELF IS IMPORTANT STEP TOWARD POLITICAL SETTLEMENT; PARTICIPANTS HAVE BEEN ABLE TO BEGIN USEFUL DIALOGUE; BUT ISRAELI ACTIONS AND STATEMENTS OUTSIDE CONFERENCE RAISE QUESTION WHETHER ISRAEL READY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF "REAL PROSPECT" OF PEACE OR WHETHER, SUPPORTED BY FOREIGN REACTIONARY CIRCLES, ISRAEL WILL PURSUE FURTHER POLICY OF RELYING ON FORCE. DEMCHENKO WARNS THAT LATTER COURSE WOULD LEAD TO "SERIOUS AGGRAVATION" OF ME SITUATION.

4. PUBLIC LECTURER AT MOSCOW RAILROAD WORKERS' CLUB DECEMBER 24 WAS ALSO OPTIMISTIC THAT CONFERENCE MIGHT BRING PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT. AFTER NOTING IN STANDARD VEIN THAT ME CONFLICT ENDED BELIEF IN ISRAELI INVINCIBILITY AND DEMONSTRATED INCREASED ARAB UNITY, LECTURER ALSO ASSERTED THAT ME CONFLICT HAD STRENGTHENED SOVIET POSITION IN ME. AS EVIDENCE HE NOTED THAT EVEN FAISAL SENT WARM GREETINGS TO SOVIET UNION ON NOVEMBER 7 AND THAT TALKS ARE NOW GOING ON CONCERNING ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN SOVIET UNION AND SAUDI ARABIA AS WELL AS OTHER PERSIAN GULF STATES WITH WHICH SOVIETS HAVE NO RELATIONS. ON SETTLEMENT ITSELF LECTURER SAID SOVIETS BELIEVE ISRAEL WILL EVENTUALLY HAVE TO ACCEPT SC RESOLUTIONS 338 AND 242. HOWEVER, ME SITUATION REMAINS CRITICAL. U.S. BELIEVES GENEVA TALKS WILL LAST LONG TIME, BUT SOVIETS BELIEVE THEY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MUST MOVE MORE QUICKLY IF RENEWAL OF HOSTILITIES IS TO BE AVOIDED.

5. COMMENT: WE FIND LECTURER'S EFFORT TO SHOW THAT ME CONFLICT HAS RAISED SOVIET STOCK IN ME RATHER STRAINED; THE EVIDENCE HE CITES -- THAT SOVIETS ARE CURRENTLY HOLDING TALKS WITH SAUDIS TOWARD ESTABLISHING RELATIONS-- MAY NOT BE PARTICULARLY PERSUASIVE FOR A

SOVIET AUDIENCE. IT DOES, HOWEVER, CAST AN INTERESTING
LIGHT ON RUMORS AND DENIALS WHICH HAVE BEEN CIRCULATING
ABOUT A CLOSER SAUDI-SOVIET RELATIONSHIP. ALTHOUGH SOVIET
PRESS HAS NEGLECTED TO REPORT GROMYKO-EBAN MEETING, THE LECTURER
BRAGGED ABOUT IT BY WAY OF SHOWING, IN ANSWER TO QUESTION,
THAT USSR DOES NOT NEED ROMANIA AS AN INTERMEDIARY WITH ISRAEL.
SOMMERLATTE

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